

7.2 How to Use Your Subconscious Brain

Jan. 7, 2011

There are many brains in your head, not just one. For example, it has a conscious and a subconscious part, and each part has many sub-parts. Most people are unskilled at using the subconscious, but the subconscious is important because (1) it controls the emotions, (2) it functions 24 hrs a day whether you are awake or asleep, and (3) it can do some things that the conscious cannot do, simply because it is a different kind of brain.

Although it is difficult to compare the conscious brain to the subconscious because they perform different functions and have different capabilities, we might guess statistically that for half the human population, the subconscious may be smarter than the conscious. Thus, in addition to the fact that you have an extra brain capability, it doesn't make any sense not to use this part of the brain that might be smarter than your conscious. In this section, I present my ideas about how the subconscious might work and demonstrate how we can accomplish some amazing feats using the subconscious.

6.2.1 Emotions

The subconscious controls emotions in at least two ways. The first is a rapid, fight or flight reaction -- generation of instant anger or fear. When such situations arise, you must react faster than you can think, so that the conscious brain must be bypassed by something that is hardwired and preprogrammed for immediate reaction. The second is a very slow, gradual realization of a deep or fundamental situation. These first and second types of subconscious brain may be entirely different parts of your brain.

Feelings of depression during a midlife crisis might be a result of the workings of the second type of subconscious: the subconscious brain has had time to figure out all the negative situations that develop as you age and the future begins to look less hopeful. Such a process requires the evaluation of myriads of good and bad possibilities of what the future might bring. When trying to evaluate such a future situation, the conscious brain would have to list all the possibilities, evaluate each, and try to remember them. The subconscious functions differently. It evaluates various situations in a non-systematic way; how it picks a particular situation for evaluation is not under your control; that is controlled more by every day events. Although it is not known how the subconscious does this, I imagine that the subconscious stores its conclusions in what might be called "emotion buckets". For each emotion, there is a bucket, and every time the subconscious comes to a conclusion, say a happy one, it deposits the conclusion in a "happy bucket". The fullness of each bucket determines your emotional state. This explains why people often can sense what is right or wrong or whether a situation is good or bad without knowing exactly what all the complex reasons are. Thus the subconscious affects our lives much more than most of us realize.

6.2.2 Using the Subconscious Brain

Usually, the subconscious goes its own way; you don't normally control which ideas it will consider, because most of us have not learned how to communicate with it. However, the events you encounter in daily life usually makes it quite clear which are important factors and which ones are unimportant, and the subconscious naturally gravitates towards the most important ideas. When these important ideas lead to important conclusions, it gets more interested. When a sufficient number of such important conclusions piles up, it will contact you. This explains why, all of sudden, an unexpected intuition will sometimes flash through your conscious mind. So the important question here is, how can you best communicate with your subconscious?

Any idea that you can convince yourself is important, or any puzzle or problem that you had tried to solve with great effort, will obviously be a candidate for consideration by the subconscious. So

this is one way in which you can present your problem to the subconscious. Furthermore, in order to be able to solve a problem, the subconscious must have all the necessary information. Therefore it is important for you to do all the research and gather as much information about the problem as you can. In college, this is how I solved many homework problems that my smarter classmates could not solve. They tried to just sit down, do their assignments, and hoped to solve the problems. Problems in a school environment are such that they are always solvable with the information given in the classroom or textbook. You just need to assemble the right parts to come up with the answer. What I did, therefore, was not to worry about being able to solve any problem immediately but to just think about it intensely and make sure that I have studied all the course material. If I could not solve the problem right away, I knew that the subconscious would go to work on it, so I could just forget about the problem and return to it later on. Thus the only requirement was that I should not wait until the last minute to try to solve such problems. Some time afterwards, the answer would suddenly pop up in my head, often at strange, unexpected times. They most frequently popped up in the early morning, when my mind was rested and fresh. Thus with experience, you can learn to present material to your subconscious as well as to receive conclusions from it. In general, the answer would not come if I intentionally asked my subconscious for it, but would come when I was doing something unrelated to the problem.

You can also use the subconscious to recall something you had forgotten. First, try to recall it as well as you can, and then completely abandon the effort for a while. After some time, your brain will often recall it for you.

Of course, we do not yet know of any direct ways to talk with your subconscious. And these communication channels are very different from person to person, so each person must experiment to see what works best. Clearly, you can improve communications with it as well as block the communication channels. Many of my smarter friends in college became very frustrated when they found out that I had effortlessly found the answer when they couldn't; and they knew they were smarter. That type of frustration can stall any communications between various parts of the brain. It is better to maintain a relaxed, positive attitude and to let the brain do its thing. That is probably why things like meditation and Chi Gong work so well. Those are effective, time tested, methods of communicating with the various parts of your brain and body.

An important method for making maximum use of the subconscious is to leave your subconscious alone without interference from the conscious brain, once you have presented it with your problem. In other words, you should forget about the problem and engage in sports or go to see a movie or do other things you enjoy, and the subconscious will do a better job because it is a completely different part of your brain. If you consciously think about the problem all the time, you will interfere against the subconscious and not allow it to go freely in its own explorations.

Different parts of the brain directly control many bodily functions such as heart beat rate, blood pressure, perspiration, digestion, salivation, the functioning of internal organs, sexual response, etc. These are powerful functions that can generate or waste huge amounts of energy so that how they function smoothly together or work against one another has an important effect on your general health and mental function. We must not forget to allow this part of your automatic brain to function normally.

The subconscious mind is probably one of the most under-utilized parts of our brain because too many of us are unaware of its existence. There must certainly be many other parts of our brain that are useful. For example, there are numerous automatic brain processes that affect our daily lives. When we see an image with our eyes, many things happen immediately and automatically. When a new image is received, the brain becomes temporarily overloaded with information processing so that it cannot perform other tasks well. This is why you feel less pain when your eyes are open than when they are closed. Thus a patient who closes his eyes and tenses his muscles when a doctor sticks a needle into him increases his pain several fold because closing the eyes allows the entire brain to focus on the pain

and tensing the muscles causes the needle to cut through more tissue – a brave person actually experiences less pain, especially if he chats with the doctor in addition to opening his eyes. Screaming in pain will probably reduce the pain.

A similar effect happens with sound. The brain automatically times the arrival of the sound in your ears to figure out where the sound is coming from. The pleasing sound of music is another automatic reaction, as are reactions to visual inputs such as pretty flowers, soothing panoramic views of mountains and lakes, or the effect of unpleasant or pleasant odors. It is one of these automatic reactions that we invoke when we listen to music; yet, just as we cannot quite explain why a pretty flower looks pretty, we still can't quite explain why music sounds so good. Perhaps it is one of those hard-wired subconscious reactions.

The identification of the different parts of the brain must surely be one of the future revolutions to come. Medical science is advancing ever more rapidly and understanding the brain will be one of the biggest breakthroughs, starting with how it develops in childhood and how we can facilitate that development. Thus it is entirely possible that Mozart was not a musical genius, but a genius created by music.